

THE
DUTY OF ABSTAINING
FROM THE USE OF
WEST INDIA PRODUCE,
A SPEECH,

DELIVERED AT
Coach-Maker's Hall,

JAN. 12, 1792.

THE SECOND EDITION.

What hast thou done? the voice of thy BROTHER'S blood
crieth unto me from the GROUND. Gen. iv. 10.

If only a *thousandth* part of the horrors attributed to the
SLAVE TRADE be necessary to it, who doth not see that
COMMODITIES coming through *such* hands are SOAKED
IN TEARS and STAINED WITH BLOOD.

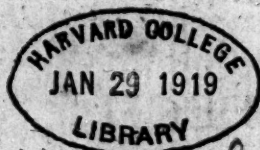
Mr. Robinson's Sermon on Slavery.

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MUCH discussion has of late been employed on the nature of the SLAVE TRADE, and of WEST INDIA SLAVERY. The Evidence produced before the House of Commons on those subjects, is so clear and pointed, as to render not only a *total Abolition* highly necessary, but any avoidable delay *criminal* to an extreme degree. That Evidence, however, seems to have failed in producing its natural effect upon the minds of a majority of that House—or if they were convinced of the manifest INJUSTICE of the Slave Trade (which is more than probable) we have to lament, that the operation of that conviction was counteracted by an INFLUENCE, not less shameful and iniquitous, than the cause for which it was exerted.

Considering the present state of the Representation of the People, this inattention to the voice of reason and humanity, cannot be matter of much surprise. But to whatever cause we may be disposed to ascribe the conduct of Parliament, the PEOPLE have evidently the means of redress in their own hands. There

exists no law by which they are *obliged* to use the Produce of the West India Islands—they have only to lay a restraint upon themselves individually, to ABSTAIN FROM THE CONSUMPTION OF THAT PRODUCE, and the end must eventually be accomplished.

The Revenue arising from the *Home-Consumption* of Sugar and Rum has, for many years, been very considerable—in proportion, therefore, to the *decrease* of that Consumption, must be the *failure* of the impost thereby raised. And if, as is generally believed, the MINISTRY are *divided* on the question respecting the ABOLITION, nothing seems so likely to *unite* them in support of that just necessary measure, as the prospect of a *certain diminution* of REVENUE, if it be not speedily effected. At all events, the People at large will be free from the *guilt* of promoting a traffic, which is equally at variance with the true principles of Commerce, and every sentiment of Justice and Humanity!

SOUTHWARK,
January 31st, 1792.

W. A.

A S P E E C H, &c.

QUESTION.

Is it not the DUTY of the PEOPLE of ENGLAND, from a principle of MORAL OBLIGATION and regard to their NATIONAL CHARACTER, to abstain from the CONSUMPTION of WEST INDIA PRODUCE till the SLAVE TRADE is abolished, and measures are taken for the Abolition of SLAVERY?

Mr. CHAIRMAN,

I FEEL a considerable degree of pleasure in being able to say, that I rank among the number of those who abstain from the Consumption of West India Produce—that I am induced to this, not from an affectation of singularity, but from a firm persuasion of Duty—and that I regard it as a duty which no considerations of pleasure, or convenience should set aside.

This Duty, Sir, is both *real* and *important*, though its novelty may have excited, in some minds, sentiments of ridicule and contempt. There are persons, capable of treating the most solemn, and long-established truths with levity and indifference: and if this were to weigh against their reception, there is not one good principle of which the human mind might not be deprived, nor scarcely any duty, however *proper* and *necessary*, of which we might not be excused the performance. It was a lively remark of the pious Mr. Hervey, that *the whim of making ridicule the test of truth, seems as suitable to the nature and fitness of things, as to place Harlequin in the seat of Lord Chief Justice.* The fact indeed is, that ridicule is *not* the test of truth, but truth is the test of ridicule: and were it not, still the subject before us would demand a serious and sober discussion.

In speaking to the Question, Sir, I shall endeavour to illustrate the *Nature* and *Importance* of the Duty therein stated.

The

The **DUTY** of *abstaining* from the Consumption of West India Produce, arises out of the **CONNECTION** which subsists between the *Consumer* of that Produce, and the *Means* by which it is cultivated.

That connection, Sir, is more close and direct than some persons may be willing to admit. The **CONSUMER** of West India Produce, may be considered as the *Master-spring* that gives motion and effect to the whole Machine of Cruelties—for him ultimately, the expedition to Africa is first concerted—for him the British sailor, naturally averse to the service, is first kidnapped, and then literally transported to the regions of disease and death—for him a fertile country is annually plundered of its Natives, and thereby prevented from being civilized—for him the horrors of the Middle Passage are realized, those scenes of dejection and despair: *So much Misery condensed in so little room*; as Mr. Wilberforce emphatically described it—for him—but it is unnecessary here, to characterize either the

inhuman traffic, or that abject *personal Slavery* which, of consequence, prevails in the British Islands—it is a *chain of WRETCHEDNESS* every link of which is stained with blood! and it involves in *equal criminality* the AFRICAN TRADER—the WEST INDIA SLAVE-HOLDER—and the BRITISH CONSUMER!

Nothing can be more evident (at least to my apprehension) than that the CONSUMER of *West India Produce* is the principal cause, both of the continuance of the SLAVE TRADE, and of the prevalence of SLAVERY. For, I would ask, *why* is the Slave Trade pursued at all? Is it not to supply the Planters with *men* to cultivate their lands? and why are the *lands* cultivated, if not to furnish the people of Europe with their produce? It must be clear then, that if that produce were not *consumed*, it would not be imported—if it were not imported, it would not be raised—and if it were not raised, there must be an end of the whole system of Slavery. These deductions, Sir, I know are general, but they serve to illustrate the
connection

As MEMBERS of CIVIL SOCIETY, we must be sensible of the vast importance of *Civilization*. Now the continuance of the SLAVE TRADE impedes every degree of *improvement* that might be introduced among the natives of Africa. We have seen that the *progress* of this trade must always be in proportion to the *encouragement* which it derives from the CONSUMERS of West India Produce. If, then, we wish the *extension* of HUMAN HAPPINESS—if we are anxious for the *spread* of the *advantages* of CIVILIZED LIFE—we shall *abstain from the Consumption of West India Produce*, because, under the present circumstances, such consumption *must* effectually retard the advancement of Knowledge and Happiness in Africa.

We are called upon to abstain from the use of West India Produce—as BRITONS, friends to *universal* FREEDOM.

that I should do this thing : shall I drink the blood of these men, that have put their lives in jeopardy !
SLAVERY inconsistent with the SPIRIT of CHRISTIANITY. A Sermon by Mr. Robinson, p. 21.

The

The *love* of LIBERTY has always been a distinguishing characteristic of the People of this country—the man whose pulse does not beat high for freedom, is destitute of the *only* PRINCIPLE by which an Englishman differs from a Turk. From this principle I infer the Duty in the Question.—

Every *friend* to freedom *must* be an *enemy* to SLAVERY—every friend to freedom, therefore, should unite in an *opposition* to Slavery.—

Abstaining from West India Produce is, in this case, opposition to Slavery, and every friend to freedom is bound to give it his support on *that* ground.—

Whatever opinion he may hold of the *efficacy* of such a measure—how little soever he may feel the *Moral obligation* he is under so to do—still as a friend to *universal* freedom, he is bound to cherish *every kind* of opposition to Slavery.

WEST INDIA SLAVERY is the *most abject* in itself, and attended also with the most *Diabolical Circumstances*. The Arguments for its Abolition not only meet

meet our Reason, our Humanity, and every Religious principle of the human mind—but they address themselves to our several SENSES. We have seen exhibited in this Hall, what was very properly termed, *an IRON argument* *, that no friend to freedom can resist—for he cannot surely look with *indifference* on such a state of servitude as *this*! LIBERTY belongs exclusively to people of no particular colour, nor of any particular country---it is an *universal* Blessing: the *inherent* RIGHT of all men: and the friend to *general* freedom must, on this principle, be an enemy to WEST INDIA SLAVERY.

* Referring to an *iron MASK* which a Gentleman had produced and put on in the Hall. He informed the Company, that it was usual in the the West Indies to MASK the Slaves, to prevent their killing themselves by *eating dirt*—he observed that as the *best* of inventions were liable to be perverted, so it had happened to this *humane* design—it was frequently put on the Negroes in *crop* time, lest they should eat the *cane*: and sometimes on the *cooks* that they might not eat the *soup*—It is, indeed, impossible for them either to *eat*, or *speak*, while the Mask is on !

To

To Abstain from the Consumption of West India Produce is, in my opinion, the *best* opposition that can now be made to West India Slavery, and most forcibly demands our concurrence and example. The public *Attention* is already excited—a spirit of *Enquiry* universally prevails—and the love of LIBERTY appears to be reviving. It is the duty of the friend of Freedom, to fan the generous flame till every atom of OPPRESSION be consumed, and there remains *no part* of the human race to claim his services ! he should

*Grasp the whole worlds of reason, life, and sense,
In one close system of BENEVOLENCE !*

This Duty becomes the more binding and urgent, from the *disinclination* which PARLIAMENT has shewn to afford redress. That *true* Representation of the People, *honestly* shut their ears against the voice of the *most tragical*, yet *best-established* EVIDENCE, that was ever produced for any cause, on any occasion—Nay, more—

In

*In BRITAIN'S Senate, MISERY'S pangs gave birth
To jests unseemly, and to horrid mirth!*

A collection of FACTS the most undeniable, and at the same time the most SHOCKING that the human imagination can conceive, was treated as the *fabulous* invention of a *new-fangled* humanity! and the utmost efforts of the most splendid talents, were of no avail against the vile influence of *West India* SLAVEHOLDERS! From the *virtuous* Legislature of this country, therefore, little remains to be expected! the decision of last year, on the Slave Trade, marks the character of that Assembly with a precision not to be mistaken! in vain have REASON, HUMANITY and JUSTICE, pleaded for the *poor* AFRICAN! It is time then that the PEOPLE shew themselves—it is time that they manifest to Europe and the World that *public* SPIRIT, that virtuous *abhorrence* of SLAVERY—to which a BRITISH SENATE is unable—or unwilling to aspire!

If

If such, Sir, are the Motives from which we ought to Abstain from the Consumption of West India Produce, they *must*, I presume—nay, I am *sure* they must—be felt in all their benign and extensive influence, by every FEMALE *breast*!

Is it possible, Sir, that the LADIES of ENGLAND, possessing a sense of *Virtue*, of *Honour*, and of *Sympathy* beyond those of any other nation—is it possible for THEM to *encourage* the SLAVE TRADE!

Can *they* persist in the use of an Article, obtained at the expence of the *Lives* and *happiness* of MILLIONS of their fellow creatures!

Can *they* think of the CONNECTION subsisting between the *consumer* of WEST INDIA PRODUCE, and the cruel *Means* by which it is acquired—and not *reject* that Produce!

Can *they* hear the VOICE of HUMANITY, demanding that the SLAVE TRADE be *Abolished*—and yet *promote* the continuance of that traffic!

Can

Can *they* feel the mild influence of CHRISTIANITY—and not *act* upon it!

Are *they* alive to the enjoyment of the blessings of SOCIAL LIFE—and yet dead to the pangs of *parting* RELATIVES—MOTHERS *torn from their* CHILDREN—WIVES *severed from their* HUSBANDS—and the violation of ALL THE TENDER TIES OF BLOOD—which this inhuman traffic occasions!—IMPOSSIBLE!—

*In THEM 'tis graceful to DISSOLVE AT WOE,
And from the SMALLEST VIOLENCE to shrink!*

They are universally considered as the MODELS of every just and virtuous *sentiment*—and we naturally look up to them as PATTERNS in all the softer *Virtues*. Their EXAMPLE, therefore, in ABSTAINING FROM THE USE OF WEST INDIA PRODUCE---must silence every murmur---must refute every objection---and render the *performance* of the Duty as UNIVERSAL as their INFLUENCE!

F I N I S.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

A Letter to the Rev. John Martin.

Occasioned by

HIS INTENDED SPEECH.

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